



Written and Oral English Language Conventions

7 questions	18 questions	20 questions	12 questions	15 questions	1 question
Word Analysis, Fluency, and Systematic Vocabulary Development	Reading Comprehension	Literary Response and Analysis	Writing Strategies	Written and Oral English Language Conventions	Writing Applications

These are the 3 CAHSEE Writing Conventions Standards.

The CAHSEE uses 15 multiple-choice questions to test your knowledge of the writing conventions standards. In this section, you do not write any essays, but you answer questions about writing. You will be expected to recognize proper sentence construction, paragraph structure, grammar, usage, and punctuation.

Grammar can be tricky. You have to learn many, many rules — remember them. California’s content standards expect you to know how to follow the conventions (that means rules) for punctuation, capitalization, grammar, and usage. So let’s see what we can do to help you through this part of the test. Some of the questions focus on choosing (and using) the right verb tenses. Others refer to misplaced modifiers.

You may be wondering, “What’s a subordinate clause?” “Do modifiers have a proper place?” “How do I control grammar?” “I never heard of parallel structure.” Quit worrying. Maybe you didn’t quite understand phrases and clauses, and maybe you don’t remember modifiers, but with a little common sense and a few rules, you can get through this. Trust us!

These passages and questions are from a previous version of the CAHSEE. Read each passage and answer each question. After each question, a solution is provided to help you understand and practice your writing conventions skills.

10WC1.1 Identify and correctly use clauses (e.g., main and subordinate), phrases (e.g., gerund, infinitive, and participial), and mechanics of punctuation (e.g., semicolons, colons, ellipses, hyphens). [5 questions]

10WC1.2 Understand sentence construction (e.g., parallel structure, subordination, proper placement of modifiers) and proper English usage (e.g., consistency of verb tenses). [5 questions]

10WC1.3 Demonstrate an understanding of proper English usage and control of grammar, paragraph and sentence structure, diction, and syntax. [5 questions]

L10SA069

Sample CAHSEE question

That collection of essays John wants on the bottom shelf.

- A John wants them, that collection of essays
- B John wants that collection of essays
- C Wanted by John, that collection of essays
- D Leave as is.

Strategy

You must carefully analyze all the options in order to do well with these questions. Notice that one option is a very awkward sentence with a double object, “them” as well as “that collection of essays.” Another reason to eliminate this option is because “them” is plural while “that collection of essays” is singular. Another option should be eliminated because it is not a complete sentence. The last option asks you to accept the original sentence as is, but the original sentence is a very awkward sentence because it does not have a normal word order. The object comes before the subject which is followed by the verb. The correct answer is a smooth sentence using a normal subject, verb, object word order.

L10SA065

Sample CAHSEE question

Walking and to jog and to cycle are activities many people can enjoy.

- A To walk, and jogging and cycle
- B To walk, to jog, and cycling
- C Walking, jogging, and cycling
- D Leave as is.

Strategy

This question tests your knowledge of parallel structure. But in order to answer these types of questions, it is important to know the many forms verbs can take. A verb stated as “to do something,” like “to jog” or “to walk” is the infinitive. A verb ending in -ing but treated as a noun, like “jogging is fun,” is the gerund. Notice in this question that the sentence has a gerund and two infinitives as its subject. Parallel structure happens when important ideas within a sentence are stated in the same form. The correct answer presents all three activities that form the subject of the sentence as gerunds.

L00SA100

Sample CAHSEE question

While Sara visited with Sam: she finished her science project.

- A with Sam. She finished
- B with Sam; she finished
- C with Sam, she finished
- D Leave as is.

Strategy

This question tests your ability to distinguish dependent and independent clauses within a sentence and how to correctly punctuate the sentence. It is important to understand what dependent and independent clauses are. An independent clause can be removed from the rest of a sentence, and it will still be a complete sentence. A dependent clause *depends* on the rest of the sentence in order to express a complete idea. “While Sara visited with Sam: she finished her science project.” In this sentence, “she finished her science project” is a complete sentence. “While Sara visited with Sam” does not express a complete thought. A dependent and independent clause must be joined with a comma in a sentence.

Sample CAHSEE question

My sister a high school freshman, is trying out for the school play.

- A sister, a high school freshman,
- B sister: a high school freshman
- C sister a high school freshman
- D Leave as is.

Strategy

This question requires you to know how to punctuate an appositive in a sentence. An appositive is a group of words that further describes a subject. Appositives are set off with commas. If it helps, remove everything between the commas: “My sister is trying out for the school play.” The added information about “my sister,” that she is “a high school freshman,” is an appositive.

Sample CAHSEE question

Mr. Forbes needs the following items for his cooking class flour, salt, and a variety of spices.

- A cooking class: flour, salt, and a variety of spices
- B cooking class; flour, salt, and a variety of spices
- C cooking class, flour, salt, and a variety of spices
- D Leave as is.

Strategy

Remember that a list is often set off with a colon. The semicolon can join independent clauses. A comma is too weak to set off a list. Look carefully at the original sentence before selecting the correct answer.

Sample CAHSEE question

We’re sorry to bother you, but we need to ask you a question.

- A sorry, to bother you but we need
- B sorry to bother you, but, we need
- C sorry to bother you but we need
- D Leave as is.

Strategy

Remember that a comma and a conjunction join two independent clauses. Carefully study the original sentence and the options.

L10SA134

Sample CAHSEE question

Akia told us about her safari across the plains of East Africa in our geography class.

- A** In our geography class, Akia told us about her safari across the plains of East Africa.
- B** Akia told us about her safari in our geography class across the plains of East Africa.
- C** In our geography class Akia told about her safari across the plains of East Africa to us.
- D** Leave as is.

Strategy

Misplaced modifiers can be a lot of fun. The original sentence implies that the safari is happening in geography class. One option implies that the geography class is across the plains of East Africa. In another option, “to us” is dangling at the end of that sentence, just begging to be moved. Clearly only one option makes everything sound right.

L00SA136

Sample CAHSEE question

The green backpack has _____ pockets than the blue one.

- A** least
- B** less
- C** fewest
- D** fewer

Strategy

Is it “less” or “fewer”? There is a difference. If it can be counted, it’s fewer. For example, I have fewer books now because I have less interest in reading. I can assign a number to the books I have, but I can’t assign a number to the interest I have. Also you need to know that adjectives can express degrees of comparison. The word “than” in the original sentence lets you know a degree of comparison is needed. Since two objects are being compared, you also should know which form of an adjective to use. Now you can find the correct answer.

Sample CAHSEE question

Tam left the decision up to _____.

- A we
- B us
- C she
- D they

Strategy

Some pronouns are used as subjects while other pronouns are used as objects. The correct answer uses a pronoun as the object of the preposition “to.” If you’re not sure, try it out. Is it “Give it to *we*” or “Give it to *she*” or “Give it to *they*”? In these examples, the pronouns sound wrong because the pronouns are supposed to be subjects. Now try this: “*We* give it to you.” In English grammar this is known as pronoun case.

L10SA073

Sample CAHSEE question

_____ going to sample different kinds of juice, aren’t they?

- A Their
- B There
- C They’re
- D They

Strategy

Be sure to distinguish meaning. Homophones are words that sound alike but have different meanings. The correct answer is a contraction of “they are.”

L20SA101

Sample CAHSEE question

Uncle Yary often said; “My way is the best way.”

- A said “My way is the best way.”
- B said, “My way is the best way”.
- C said, “My way is the best way.”
- D Leave as is.

Strategy

This question tests your knowledge of how to properly punctuate a direct quotation within a sentence. Remember that a direct quotation is set off by a comma before the beginning of the direct quotation, and the final punctuation mark goes inside the closed quotation marks.

For more practice on these types of questions, go to the Released Test Questions at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/hs/resources.asp>.